

40,000 Christians Fasting, Praying Over Music City

In my over 40 years as a board member with Intercessors for America national prayer ministry, I've rarely seen something of this magnitude. I've served God in Cleveland; Washington, D.C.; Maryland; Virginia and now the Nashville area, but I've never witnessed what multitudes of us are experiencing here today.

Imagine 40,000 people from over 400 Christian churches uniting together to pray for everyone by name in our city and metropolitan area. Yet that is what's happening in our area known as "Music City" as we anticipate a major move of God in our midst.

"Awaken Nashville" is the name for an initiative of citywide unified prayer and fasting that began Jan. 27 with a packed kick-off event at historic Ryman Auditorium. It will conclude on Feb. 24.

Intercessors from more than 400 churches willingly received a prayer warrior packet that included a unique list of 15 specific people to pray for during the month. It also included their addresses and postcards so we can mail each one a handwritten note to encourage them, communicate hope and tell them of God's unchanging love.

A No-Competition Zone

In my 4 1/2 decades of full-time vocational ministry, I've watched repeatedly how envy, ambition, carnal promotion and strife go hand in hand undermining God's purposes for a church, ministry and the wider body of Christ. "For where there is envying and strife, there is confusion and every evil work" (James 3:16). Satan knows "a house divided against itself will not stand" (see Mark 3:25), so he and his demons

work overtime to foster polarization and fleshly pride.

Here in the Nashville area, we're committed to being intentional in cultivating a culture of servant leaders committed to what senior prophetic leader and friend James Goll calls a "no-competition zone." We pray for God to help us be proactive in rejecting our tendencies to remain isolated rather than building relationally, avoiding comparison and coming together to support each other. Country Hall of Famer Ricky Skaggs is unquestionably famous, yet he simply takes his place among us to advance the kingdom of God. The same goes for Michael W. Smith.

We believe there are essentials to cooperate with God for supernatural transformation of a locality: We must gain an awareness of the urgency of the hour and be bold in addressing cultural issues like racism, abortion, immorality and so on; turn to God in humble prayer and fasting; and obey the Great Commission to share the gospel consistently and call people to repentance. Finally, leaders must be intentional in pursuing church renewal as we trust God for another Great Awakening.

We're also committed to be intergenerational in honoring spiritual fathers and mothers in the city as we co-labor with the upcoming generation of young men and women of God. Remember the beautiful acrostic, .? Together Everyone Accomplishes More!

Fruit Is Coming Forth

Secular observers label Nashville "It City" because of our explosive growth and prosperity. Spiritual observers see something supernatural. Surveying the scene here are some developments:

- Months ago, about 18,000 of us Christians gathered in a large downtown auditorium for an evening of prayer and worship. Prior to the event, a couple hundred leaders and wives gathered for fellowship and prayer. Michael W. Smith led

the evening's worship. It was a sacred assembly permeated by the manifest presence of God. Many present exclaimed they'd never experienced anything like it!

- Praying that God would raise up righteous leaders and remove those who are not, we've seen a liberal, pro-abortion Democrat mayor resign abruptly after being exposed in a scandal of adultery and fraud.

- We've witnessed the election of our first female United States Senator, Marsha Blackburn, a devoted Christian. We also elected Governor Bill Lee, a committed Christian who is uncompromisingly pro-life. Both govern by conservative principles, not political correctness.

- Recently, the last Planned Parenthood abortion chamber in Nashville was closed down although they've pledged not to "throw in the towel" as we engage as we must in this monumental battle for the sanctity of human life.

- This week, our statewide newspaper, *The Tennessean*, did a large article with an accompanying photograph of intercessors engaging in this united initiative of prayer. Since Sunday's edition has the largest circulation, people throughout our entire state were made aware of the endeavor.

- I met for brunch with a fellow who carries the No. 3 position at the newspaper. He's the editor for civic engagement and the Op-Ed page. We are miles apart on many issues, especially the LGBTQ agenda, but we are fostering a friendship and working to nurture greater civility in our city.

We are on a journey and have a long way to go, but we are purpose driven and passionate for Jesus to be exalted in our families, churches and city. As leaders, we thank God for His favor upon us here in Nashville. We take seriously 2 Chronicles 7:14, "If My people who are called by My name will humble themselves and pray, and seek My face and turn from

their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and will heal their land.”

Here's the Deal: David Clayton, pastor of Ethos Church, simply took his place as a servant to help us in this citywide Awaken Nashville effort. He said, “It can be hard to get churches to just eat barbecue together. So to see something spiritual like this has been absolutely amazing!” He cast the vision for unified prayer and fasting that God gave him and his wife. Because of the healthy atmosphere we enjoy, it was easy to discern this as the will of God, so churches and ministries throughout the metro area came together for His glory. We are believing the best is yet to come!